



Newsletter 11th Oct 2003
Volume 1, Issue 3

Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust

www.sigbox.co.uk

Now we know the damage:

- Feasibility Study Report completed
- Detailed costings provided
- Grant applications underway

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Why are we waiting?

Welcome to the third newsletter of the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust. Since the start of the project many friends and members have put in a lot of work to get us where we are now.

A great deal has been achieved in terms of raising the profile of the project and putting it onto a professional footing. Unfortunately, taking a look at the signal box (which is in much the same sorry state) you can't yet see the fruit of those labours.

A comprehensive feasibility study with completed drawings and plans has been produced and is forming the basis of our current work. This work includes

Feasibility Study

We are extremely grateful to the Architectural Heritage Fund which awarded us a grant of £3,300 towards the cost of the Feasibility study.

The study found that the only feasible way to save the building was to use it as a railway heritage and museum attraction. This would be dependent on the availability of volunteers (which appears not to be a problem!) and a large amount of grant funding.

The funds required amount to approximately £120,000. Although a large sum, they mainly arise because the whole structure must be underpinned, the roof needs

meetings with the local planning department, grant applications, and our submission to the charity commission.

The feasibility study also included a detailed condition survey. This will form the basis of our tenders to builders for the specialist work required for roofing and underpinning etc.

Our main disappointment is that Network Rail have not yet produced a lease for the signal box. Despite assurances in March that 'this will be an easy one' and 'you'll be in by the summer'. We shall be lobbying at the highest level to move this forward.

replacement (using its old slates of course), every pane of glass is broken (and they are 6mm thick), and the stairs must be remade.

This cost even makes allowance for the use of volunteers to do the painting, gardening, interior fit out, etc.

The study proposes the removal of the toilet that was added in the 1960's and provision of a new toilet on the ground floor, along with some exhibition space.

It also looked at the ongoing maintenance costs and proposes the provision of five parking spaces to be let at approx. £2,500 per annum.

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a Company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 04653488.
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East Elevation

Drawing from the condition report

From June 1953 'Trains Illustrated'

The old Midland Railway in my opinion was a railway of distinction. That distinction was nowhere more apparent than in its signalboxes. Everything about them seemed to have its own individuality, sometimes merely difference from other lines, more often difference allied to improvement.

Take first the outside appearance. Midland signalboxes were pleasingly designed, and were always of made of wood, with the lower half up to floor level finished in horizontal overlapping boarding. Round the front and side there ran a gallery for window cleaning, above which there was a short length of vertical boarding to the foot of the windows in front and up to the eaves at the back of the box. The windows were large, divided into three vertical divisions, and with the top corners

chamfered. The slated roof had ends with a slope at the same angle as the front and rear parts, and each end of the roof ridge was enriched by a finial of the same pattern as those on Midland signal posts. Through the roof projected a plain stovepipe.

The exterior woodwork was painted a distinctive banana yellow, with the window frames white. The name of the box was displayed on the front below the gallery on a wooden board with iron letters, or sometimes on a blue enameled sign, near which was a large lamp (oil or gas) fixed to illuminate the large numerals on the tended sides of passing engines, and usually referred to as the "number snatcher". Broad wooden steps, with cast iron treads marked "Midland Railway", led up to the box.

- St Albans exactly!



Plan of the site

Grant applications

The Railway Heritage Trust grant application has been completed and submitted to them. A meeting has been arranged for mid October to discuss the project, and perhaps they can help push the lease? We think it would be an ideal project for their support.

We are asking for approximately 20-25% of the costs with the remainder being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The HLF pre-application response has already been received, and it is very positive. The detailed application is now underway. There are about 40 pages of questions to be completed, so it will take a week or two!

Letters received

'I have lived in St Albans for over 40 years and recall fondly when, as a boy, I went trainspotting just by the signal box. I would very much like to see the box restored and of historical benefit for the community. The society agrees with this point of view' - St Albans Civic Society.

'Interested in reports re the Signal Box as my father was signalman there till his death in 1934. I myself worked the box at Sandridge before the war. Wishing you all the best in your venture' - Arthur Allen

'Herewith my application and cheque... I long to help!' - Hugh Ramsey (& others!)



Photo of the track diagram sent by a friend

Become a 'friend' of the Signal Box

We need all the friends we can get! If you've not already signed up as friend, please don't hesitate. We also have a growing number of volunteers hoping to get 'stuck in' to the signaling, decorating, gardening, etc. work. If you can help please let us know. A few hours a month is all we need.

We've not had a volunteer's meeting yet, due to the danger of wandering on to the midland main line. But as soon as the site is secure, a meeting will be arranged to see what needs to be done and do it!

see www.sigbox.co.uk